

## Vermonters continuing fighting planned tire burn

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The Associated Press  
MIDDLEBURY, Vt.

Vermont residents, including the governor and congressional delegation, continued to fight International Paper Co.'s proposal to burn tires to generate electricity for its Ticonderoga, N.Y., mill Tuesday.

They made their pitch again at a hearing called by Vermont environmental officials, who planned to compile testimony from a public hearing and forward it to their New York counterparts.

Opponents continued to make clear before the hearing, which drew a crowd of about 100 on a cold and rainy night, that they believed International Paper should install equipment that would clean its emissions even before a planned two-week burn to test technology.

Gov. James Douglas said he was disappointed the company had rejected his offer of financial assistance to help pay for the pollution control equipment.

"IP's response was quite direct and adverse to the olive branch that I offered last week. I guess they want to burn the olive branch, too," Douglas said. "They're really talking about seeing how much they can legally pollute."

Elizabeth Carpenter, who said she has a small organic vegetable farm in Orwell, addressed her comments at the hearing to New York regulators. "You are the Department of Environmental Conservation. Implicitly you are charged with conserving the environment, and I would hope are also concerned with the health of the people living in Vermont.

"It is your duty to take environmental and health issues into consideration when making a decision whether or not to issue a permit that would allow a plant to release even more toxins than they already do," Carpenter said.

Representatives of both the New York DEC and International Paper were on hand to listen.

Vermont Environmental Conservation Commissioner Jeffrey Wennberg said he believed Vermont still had a chance to affect the outcome in New York.

Wennberg said New York regulators "can issue the permit as drafted, respond to the comments, and just say 'We're not persuaded.' They can modify the permit in some fashion, or they can pull it back and say, 'We have to reconsider what we've proposed here and possibly ask IP for additional information.'"

Opponents argue the two-week test burn will dump toxins including fine particulates and zinc downwind, particularly on the Vermont side of Lake Champlain. They're worried about its effects on tourism and agriculture as well as public health.

They want International Paper to install a device called an electrostatic precipitator that would lessen the chemicals that would be released. They also are calling for more stringent tests to measure the amount of fine particulates released during the burn.

"We're opposed to burning tires without adequate pollution controls," said David Carlson of Middlebury, a director of People for Less Pollution. "We're upset that the test won't measure for fine particulates."

Last month, the New York Department of Environmental Conservation issued a draft permit for a two-week test burn. Hundreds of Vermonters turned out for a hearing on the proposal in Ticonderoga last week.

Vermont officials \_ including the governor, who lives in Middlebury, a few miles from the Lake Champlain shoreline \_ want International Paper to install the \$8 million electrostatic precipitator, which it has at most of its plants that burn tires.

International Paper has said it will only install the equipment if the test burn determines one is needed.

"The test itself will be hazardous," said Dr. Jack Mayer, a pediatrician in Middlebury, who said he has studied the effects of toxins in children. "It's two weeks of burning increasing amounts of tires. As those tires are burned, they're releasing fine particulates, and most of them are going downwind and going to end up in Vermont."

Vermont has been fighting the test burn since it was proposed in 2003, but the state has no official standing.

The New York Department of Environmental Conservation has said it will review comments from Tuesday's hearing, being conducted by the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency still must review the proposal. The public comment period ends Dec. 9.

Sen. James Jeffords, I-Vt., introduced legislation Tuesday, co-sponsored by Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., that would require the EPA to issue performance standards for mills that switch to tire-derived fuels. It would also require the EPA to research the health impacts from the increased air emissions.

Jeffords said the bill would "ensure that Americans who live near pulp and paper mills that burn tires are protected from these harmful air pollutants."

Rep. Bernard Sanders, I-Vt., introduced companion legislation in the House.

International Paper said Tuesday it could save \$3.8 million a year by burning up to 72 tons of shredded tires a day for electricity. The company has said the cost-saving plan is needed to ensure the viability of the plant.

Opponents say they don't want to threaten any jobs at the plant, which employs about 700.

"This is not about burning tires, this is about the proper pollution controls to burn tires safely," said Mayer, also a member of People for Less Pollution.

"We feel that having proper pollution control is going to keep this plant open and viable for the future."